

fee waiver issue under § 388.109(b)(6), unless the requester has provided a written statement agreeing to pay some or all fees pending the outcome of the waiver question.

(b)(1) *Multitrack processing.* Upon receipt of a request, the Director, Office of External Affairs, will place the request in one of three tracks for processing:

(i) Track One—records that are readily identifiable and were previously cleared for release (including those subject to multiple requests and placed in the Public Reference Room);

(ii) Track Two—records that are readily identifiable, and require limited review; and

(iii) Track Three—complex and/or voluminous records requiring a significant search and/or review.

(2) Each track specified in paragraph (b)(1) of this section will be processed on a first in, first out basis, where practicable. A requester may modify a request to obtain processing on a faster track.

(c)(1) *Timing of response.* Except as provided in paragraphs (c)(4) and (d)(3) of this section, within 20 working days after receipt of the request for agency records, the Director, Office of External Affairs, will comply with the request or deny the request in whole or in part, and will notify the requester of the determination, of the reasons for a decision to withhold any part of a requested document, and of the right of the requester to appeal any adverse determination in writing to the General Counsel or General Counsel's designee.

(2) The Director, Office of External Affairs, will attempt to provide records in the form or format requested, where feasible, but will not provide more than one copy of any record to a requester.

(3) Any determination by the Director, Office of External Affairs, to withhold information will, where feasible, indicate the approximate volume of information withheld, and will indicate, for partially-released materials, where redactions have been made, unless to do so would harm an interest protected by a FOIA exemption.

(4) The time limit for the initial determination required by paragraph (c)(1) of this section may be extended as set forth in § 388.110(b).

(d)(1) *Expedited processing.* A requester may seek expedited processing on the basis of a compelling need. Expedited processing will be granted if the requester demonstrates that:

(i) Failure to obtain the records on an expedited basis can reasonably be expected to pose an imminent threat to the life or physical safety of an individual, or

(ii) In the case of a requester primarily engaged in the dissemination of information, there is an urgency to inform the public concerning Federal Government activity.

(2) A request for expedited processing under this section must be supported with detailed credible documentation, including a statement certified to be true and correct to the requester's best knowledge and belief.

(3) The Director, Office of External Affairs, will decide within 10 calendar days of receipt of the request whether it is eligible for expedited processing. The Director will notify the requester of the reasons for denial of expedited processing and of the right of the requester to appeal to the General Counsel or General Counsel's designee.

(e) The procedure for appeal of denial of a request for Commission records, or denial of a request for expedited processing, is set forth in § 388.110.

[Order 488, 53 FR 1473, Jan. 20, 1988, as amended by Order 562, 58 FR 62521, Nov. 29, 1993; Order 597, 63 FR 5453, Feb. 3, 1998]

§ 388.109 Fees for record requests.

(a) *Fees for records available through the Public Reference Room—1) General rule.* The fee for finding and duplicating records available in the Commission's Public Reference Room will vary depending on the size and complexity of the request. A person can obtain a copy of the schedule of fees in person or by mail from the Public Reference Room. This schedule is also available on the Commission's Web site. Copies of documents also may be made on self-service duplicating machines located in the Public Reference Room. In addition, copies of data extracted from the Commission's files through electronic media are available on a reimbursable basis, upon written request to the Public Reference Room.

(2) Stenographic reports of Commission hearings are made by a private contractor. Interested persons may obtain copies of public hearing transcripts from the contractor at prices set in the contract, or through the search and duplication service noted above. Copies of the contract are available for public inspection in the Public Reference Room.

(3) Copies of transcripts, electronic recordings, or minutes of Commission meetings closed to public observation containing material nonexempt pursuant to § 375.206(f) of this chapter are also available at the actual cost of duplication or transcription.

(b) *Fees for records not available through the Public Reference Room (FOIA or CEII requests).* The cost of duplication of records not available in the Public Reference Room will depend on the number of documents requested, the time necessary to locate the documents requested, and the category of the persons requesting the records. The procedures for appeal of requests for fee waiver or reduction are set forth in § 388.110.

(c) *Fee reduction or waiver.* (1) Any fee described in this section may be reduced or waived if the requester demonstrates that disclosure of the information sought is:

(i) In the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government, and

(ii) Not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.

(2) The Commission will consider the following criteria to determine the public interest standard:

(i) Whether the subject of the requested records concerns the operations or activities of the government;

(ii) Whether the disclosure is likely to contribute to an understanding of government operations or activities;

(iii) Whether disclosure of the requested information will contribute to public understanding; and

(iv) Whether the disclosure is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of government operations or facilities.

(3) The Commission will consider the following criteria to determine the commercial interest of the requester:

(i) Whether the requester has a commercial interest that would be furthered by the requested disclosure; and, if so

(ii) Whether the magnitude of the identified commercial interest of the requester is sufficiently large, in comparison with the public interest in disclosure, that disclosure is primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.

(4) This request for fee reduction or waiver must accompany the initial request for records and will be decided under the same procedures used for record requests.

(d) *Debt collection.* The Commission will use the authorities mandated in the Debt Collection Act of 1982, 31 U.S.C. 3711, 3716–3719 (1982), including disclosure to consumer reporting agencies and use of collection agencies, where appropriate, to encourage payment of outstanding unpaid FOIA invoices.

(e) *Annual adjustment of fees—1) Update and publication.* The Commission, by its designee, the Executive Director, will update the fees established in this section each fiscal year. The Executive Director will publish the fees in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(2) *Payment of updated fees.* The fee applicable to a particular Freedom of Information Act request will be the fee in effect on the date that the request is received.

[Order 488, 53 FR 1473, Jan. 20, 1988, as amended by Order 597, 63 FR 5454, Feb. 3, 1998; Order 640, 65 FR 33448, May 24, 2000; Order 625, 67 FR 21996, May 2, 2002; Order 648, 69 FR 41191, July 8, 2004; 72 FR 63985, Nov. 14, 2007]

§ 388.110 Procedure for appeal of denial of requests for Commission records not publicly available or not available through the Public Reference Room, denial of requests for fee waiver or reduction, and denial of requests for expedited processing.

(a)(1) A person whose request for records, request for fee waiver or reduction, or request for expedited processing is denied in whole or part may